

CORRESPONDENCE

Is War Dysgenic?

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Squadron Leader Usher's doubt regarding the truth of Lord Horder's statement that "war is dysgenic" arises from the assumption that the victor in war is necessarily superior mentally and (or) physically to the vanquished. Actually the victor may be superior only numerically, as in the recent conflict between Russia and Finland. Similarly, in that form of civil warfare known as a "General Election," victory goes always to the numerically superior party, with little regard to mental or physical fitness. Such events are dysgenic on the average.

GUY PORTER.

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—The editorial comments on the above subject in the last issue of the *EUGENICS REVIEW* are of absorbing interest and, so far as I can see, completely defeat my case. Also Mr. Porter's observation is very much to the point.

The chief defect in my previous letter seems to lie in the suggestion that Natural Selection is eugenic, when quite obviously it is not. All it achieves is the survival of the organism—or body of organisms—most suited for a particular environment at any particular moment. Occasionally this leads to the opposite of advancement, and is well illustrated in parasitic degeneration.

The one hope for *homo sapiens* appears to me to be the fact that at last Nature has selected an organism which is able to exercise a conscious influence on its own environment, and thus favour its own survival. But I am extremely sceptical

whether that ability will be sagely used—for are we not all the lineal descendants of those who, in the past, fought the fiercest, killed the most effectively, robbed the most cleverly, and who ate the most? These qualities remain part of our inevitable hereditary endowment as a species, whether they are disguised or undisguised.

C. USHER.

Squadron Leader.

The Family

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—I venture to write to you to describe three quite nice normal young couples, because I believe they typify tens of thousands of others. (They each have a charwoman who comes in two or three times a week for rough cleaning.)

The first have a baby a year old. Fortunately, they live in a town, and the mother is able to do her shopping with the child in a pram. But she can never leave it alone in the house. She can go nowhere, never visit her friends or have any recreation.

The second couple say frankly, "We should love to have children, but under present conditions it is impossible. We don't look on the wife from the old domestic point of view. We like to shut up the house and get about together. We often go away for week-ends. Please don't mock us by talking about children."

The third couple had a car, and a baby six months old. They went about a great deal with the baby in a basket. The poor child is now dead!

S. M. FOX.

Witham Calne, Wilts.

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